

**Statement**  
  
**of**  
  
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**Under Secretary for Preparedness**  
**U.S. Department of Homeland Security**  
  
**Before the**  
  
**Committee on Government Reform**  
**U.S. House of Representatives**  
  
**Hurricane Preparedness: A National Perspective**

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## Introduction

Good morning Chairman Davis and Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to be here to discuss our nation's preparedness as we approach the 2006 hurricane season.

As you know, I was appointed as the Under Secretary for Preparedness in the aftermath of a nation shocked by the devastation and loss wrought by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Since September of last year, Congress has held over 100 hearings related to the federal, state, and local response to Hurricane Katrina, with the Department of Homeland Security officials testifying at over 30 percent of these hearings. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has also cooperated with the House, Senate, and Administration's inquiries relating to various aspects of emergency preparation and response; subsequently hundreds of Departmental officials have been interviewed, hundreds of thousands of documents have been provided, and hundreds of detailed questions have been answered. The national review that has taken place over the past eight months has been almost without precedent.

I want to offer a perspective of more than 20 years in this field. Despite numerous disasters since I began my career in the 1980's there has never been sustained and orchestrated commitment like we see today to truly making sure that these are lessons learned and not simply lessons documented. Hurricanes Andrew and Hugo, the Loma Prieta and Northridge Earthquakes, the first bombing of the World Trade Center and the Federal Building in Oklahoma highlight some of the same problems identified during Katrina. None of these disasters were anywhere close to the scale of Katrina. In short, it reminds all of us that our national approach to preparedness has not been optimized for two decades – and that is one of the reasons I accepted the offer to take on this job.

Since my appointment, I have spent a considerable amount of time examining and understanding the myriad challenges facing all levels of our national preparedness posture. I'm sure you can appreciate the magnitude of the task. And what I have

discovered is that America's approach to preparedness was not sufficiently comprehensive, dynamic or flexible enough to react to changes in a continuum of risk. We have chosen to react to the last disaster and have not demanded nor embraced an approach that gets us ready for the full range of hazards and threats that characterize America's risk continuum.

Secretary Chertoff's Second Stage Review, announced just over a month before Katrina hit, has proven invaluable in accelerating the pace of transforming our national preparedness. One of the many unfortunate consequences of the Katrina experience was the inability to drive the discussion of this transformation into the mainstream of our discourse here in Washington, in state Capitols and in local communities and family rooms. The consolidation of all preparedness functions in the Preparedness Directorate has afforded our nation an opportunity to better coordinate and integrate preparedness across the broad spectrum of our Federal, State, Local, Tribal, territorial and private sector partners. DHS now contains most of the federal disaster-related preparedness and response functions for both man-made and natural disasters. Because of our incident management and coordination responsibilities, we have a clearly vested interest even in those responsibilities not residing in the Department. And although significant challenges remain which will require further concentrated effort, we have repaired or strengthened as many or more, and we continue to work hand-in-hand on some of the more critical ones such as the retooling of FEMA to ensure the federal government can provide more resources quicker, sooner, and more safely.

The mission of the Preparedness Directorate is to catalyze the government's capabilities to meet threats and stoke the will of the American people to build a more prepared and resilient nation. To do so, we define, strengthen and measure preparedness capabilities of the Nation to prevent, protect against, respond to and recover from major disasters, terrorist attacks and other emergencies. Preparedness has already been recognized as a mission that has been and will be infused in everything we do at DHS. Secretary Chertoff said in announcing the Second Stage Review that "In the broadest sense, preparedness addresses the full range of our capabilities to prevent, protect against, and

respond to acts of terror or other disasters.” In the intervening months since Katrina, DHS has moved swiftly to focus the appropriate aspects of the comprehensive tools of our national power to dramatically improve the government’s preparedness – at all levels – especially for this hurricane season.

As President Bush said on April 27, 2006, in New Orleans, Louisiana, “One of the things that we’re working on is to make sure that we’ve learned the lessons from Katrina -- we’ve learned lessons at the Federal level and State level and the local level. And we’re now working closely together in preparation of the upcoming hurricane season.” I am confident that our nation’s hurricane preparedness efforts are constructive and practical and have greatly increased our nation’s readiness. I am beginning to see a transformation in *how we prepare* as well as significant progress in our ability to bring together independent efforts to produce more coordinated national preparedness capabilities.

This change in how we prepare should be understood not simply as a step in the continuum of what we do to manage risks to the homeland or the function of a single entity. Rather, it is the umbrella over the continuum. It is the thread that weaves together all we do in order to ensure a first responder gets the resources to save and protect lives without first having to know whether it was Mother Nature, a terrorist or simply a human failure that caused the problem.

Preparedness is not just an administrative function within the Department of Homeland Security. We led the integration effort among DHS, offices and components, while also enabling synchronization across the Federal interagency community, our State, local, territorial, tribal and private sector partners, and the most critical element – the American people. It is a shared national mission — not simply a Federal activity — and we are making considerable headway. I cannot underestimate the value of the House, Senate and Administration reports on Katrina, among others. All of this work is providing critical clarity to the national efforts to re-engineer and strengthen America’s preparedness. Each recommendation offers a suggested way forward that has already been factored into our multi-year national work plan. Most notably, the supporting

analysis for the recommendations offers significant clarity on what actually needs to be done at all levels to be better prepared.

To give the Committee a sense of how we are approaching the substantial mission of harmonizing and implementing the various report recommendations we have received, we have used the National Fire Protection Association – Standard 1600 as a widely recognized, quality-driven reference metric used by Federal, State, local, tribal and territorial emergency response communities as well as the private-sector to group all of the recommendations. The NFPA 1600 Standard is a common set of criteria useful in assessing or developing disaster management, emergency management and business continuity programs. It is collaborated on by a group of Emergency Management entities (FEMA, NEMA, IAEM and NFPA), but is released by the NFPA (National Fire Protection Association). We are now monitoring progress on implementing substantial numbers of these recommendations and focusing resources on critical recommendation to ensure they are implemented successfully.

Achieving a broader and truly *national* preparedness posture is critical to America's future safety and security. The Department and our State, tribal, local, and private sector partners must coalesce, integrate, and synchronize many disparate initiatives while preserving unique and critical missions, cultures, and identities of individual organizations. Therefore, integration, synchronization, and communication become the foundations to our national preparedness efforts.

One of the most important things I do as the Under Secretary for Preparedness is promote and encourage vertical and horizontal communication. Without effective communication between the federal government and with our state, local, territorial, tribal, and our private sector partners, our preparedness efforts will be disjointed and uncoordinated. We have placed a premium on this most basic skill in getting ready for the upcoming hurricane season.

## State and Local Preparedness

**Mr. Chairman, the Committee has raised concerns that the states – especially those in the hurricane affected areas -- are not prepared to respond to catastrophic events.**

I agree Mr. Chairman, to identify shortfalls in preparedness, all states, territories and major cities have been visited by a team of emergency management experts, their emergency plans have been reviewed and recommendations for remediation initiatives have been developed. This substantial initiative was undertaken in response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, when the President and Congress issued a series of calls for the Federal government to determine the status of catastrophic planning in the States, territories and urban areas across the nation. In response, DHS, in coordination with the Department of Transportation (DOT) and with support from the Department of Defense (DOD), launched the Nationwide Plan Review. The review included two phases.

Phase one – a self assessment--was completed in February. We will complete phase two on time by June 1<sup>st</sup> of this year. In fact, this undertaking has been so massive that according to the Director of this project, the 2,757 plans and thousands of related documents would fill a significant portion of this hearing room.

Phase I involved a self-assessment of plans by 50 States, 6 territories and 75 urban areas/major cities using guidance and criteria provided by DHS. The Department, through Preparedness Information Bulletin Number 197 issued November 23, 2005, provided comprehensive guidance to the participating jurisdictions on the types of information required for the self-assessment. DHS posed a number of questions designed to determine the status of emergency planning efforts within the participating jurisdictions. It should be noted that participation in the Nationwide Plan Review is a prerequisite for receipt of Fiscal Year 2006 DHS Homeland Security grant funds.

The Department received responses from 98 percent of the participants. DHS provided a report summarizing Phase I results to Congress on February 10, 2006. The report included the following summary of findings:

- States' and urban areas' plan components are generally consistent with existing Federal planning guidance such as *SLG 101* (State & Local Guidance 101) and voluntary standards such as NFPA 1600;
- For states and urban areas having plans that are consistent with existing Federal planning guidance and voluntary standards does not necessarily translate into confidence in those plans to manage catastrophic events;
- The majority of states and urban areas have exercised their plan components within the past two years, though updates to plan components have not been consistently tested;
- Plan components that have been updated recently are more likely to be consistent with existing Federal planning guidance and voluntary standards;
- Plan components that have been updated recently are more likely to be considered adequate for managing catastrophic events; and
- More populous states tend to have plan components that are consistent with existing Federal planning guidance and voluntary standards.

The Phase I results underscore the need for more common planning assumptions and methods, better targeting of grant funding and a common framework for assessing and reporting on plan effectiveness. The findings also highlight that our approach during the past 15 years has been neither comprehensive nor effective.

In Phase 2, DHS deployed Peer Review Teams consisting of 77 former State and local homeland security and emergency management officials to States and urban areas, to review and validate the self-assessments, and help determine requirements for Federal planning assistance. At the conclusion of each visit, the Peer Review Team completed a comprehensive report and submitted it to DHS. The Peer Review process validated the

reviews as it was not simply federal officials. Those who reviewed plans were experienced credible emergency management professionals with experience in the challenges of emergency response within State and local government.

The speed and scope of data collection was extraordinary. The Peer Review Teams completed 131 site visits over the course of 62 business days, visited with over 1,086 public safety and homeland security officials, and collected and reviewed 2,757 Emergency Operations Plans and supporting documents. Translating results into focused, evidenced-based recommendations required extensive coordination and analysis of self-assessments, field research, qualitative and quantitative data, and judgments of experienced interdisciplinary experts. The results provide a comprehensive assessment of the status of nationwide emergency planning and recommendations targeted at delivering optimal, achievable outcomes. In addition to specific recommendations, the Review provided other benefits, including:

- Collection and analysis of current plans including “best practices” from review participants;
- Development of plan review criteria, validation of the peer review process, and creation of a core team of experts; and
- “On-the-spot” technical assistance and immediate feedback to other efforts, such as development of concepts of operation to support enhancements for the 2006 hurricane season.

The results of the site visits and specific recommendations to strengthen catastrophic planning will be provided in a final report to the President and Congress soon..

Outmoded planning products, processes, and tools are primary contributors to the inadequacy of catastrophic planning. These conclusions closely mirror findings in many of the Hurricane Katrina after-action reports. The complex reasons for the current status of plans reinforce the need to modernize our preparedness processes – including planning, products, tools, and the training, education, and development of planners who



are expected to use the tools and hold them accountable. We also need to exercise these plans utilizing the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program. By using this program, we are able to standardize the way we exercise our plans, and make adjustments, accordingly.

When a catastrophic event overwhelms a single jurisdiction or has region-wide impact, effective response hinges on combined action and pooling of resources. Our large effort to secure our home land, including the core responsibilities of the emergency management community, is characterized by divided and decentralized planning responsibilities among levels of government and private organizations. Achieving unity of effort with *planning* is critical to ensuring unity among *all* during operations, for all threats and hazards.

This fundamental point is of greatest import: coordinated planning represents the single convergence point where Federal, State, local and private sector concepts and resources can be translated into specific patterns of action and synchronized to achieve unity of effort. This point is the “center of gravity” for modernization. Correspondingly, the bulk of the House, Senate and White House recommendations stem from planning problems. Going forward, the goal must be to establish a networked, collaborative national planning effort that:

- Satisfies planners’ information needs;
- Provides procedures and tools to accomplish pre-incident plan synchronization;
- Allows faster development or revision of living plans;
- Provides flexible options that accommodate the diverse hazards and threats we face; and,
- Realistically establishes capacity for inter-jurisdictional and intra-jurisdictional mutual aid.

Planning modernization alone is insufficient; it must be fully integrated with other preparedness initiatives, such as funding, information sharing, and education to fully realize improvements in our collective readiness. The Nationwide Plan Review unequivocally demonstrates that officials at every level of government are committed to strengthening their plans and planning processes and support major modernization. They recognize that the status quo of outmoded processes, rudimentary planning tools, and insufficient collaboration is insufficient in the face of today's challenges. Planners, operators and managers are clearly learning and evolving. Since 9/11 and, more recently, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, officials at all levels have proven they can rapidly develop new doctrine, recruit staff, train, educate, exercise and develop products, processes, and new means of collaboration.

### **Evacuation Planning**

**Mr. Chairman as you know this committee has expressed concern regarding the failure of evacuation planning and the resulting delays in relief activity that slowed response recovery efforts in response to Hurricane Katrina.**

I share this concern and we as a Department have taken the initiative to address this challenge. It has been a long-standing practice, and in most cases is still operative, that the responsibility for evacuations is the duty of state and local officials and resources. That being said, the Gulf coast remains a concern due to the fragility of their infrastructure and resources. Secretary Chertoff has taken a committed, direct and personal interest in preparations for hurricane season in the Gulf States. He has commissioned multiple teams and exercises to manage the inherent risk of further hurricanes making landfall in the Gulf Coast area. Additionally, to the degree that federal resources are made available for evacuation purposes, the principal focus of these resources should be targeted on those with the least capacity to help themselves – especially those with acute medical needs.

I have issued a mission assignment to FEMA to lead a 70 member field coordination effort to provide a federal interagency planning support capacity. I have also issued mission assignments in support of FEMA to the Coast Guard, Transportation Security Administration, Department of Transportation, Health and Human Services, the Veterans Administration, the Department of Defense and the Red Cross to name a few. This is not a paper exercise; we have our preparedness troops on the ground from all relevant departments and agencies providing direct technical evacuation planning assistance to coastal parishes (through Parish Action Teams) in Louisiana and counties in Mississippi and Alabama. Critical to this effort has been the provision to local jurisdictions of up-to-date data and analysis of demographics, resources and infrastructure in the wake of 2005 hurricane damage. This data includes vulnerable transitional housing, key shelter identification, pre-event registration deployment sites and pre-positioned resource and commodity sites. Many of these resources will be deployed forward well in advance of potential hurricane landfall.

DHS has taken the initiative to review 46 of 48 evacuation plans for hurricane season and has made remedial recommendations and factored these into the National plan. The National plan has validated and has prepared contingencies of resource gaps that are acknowledged and agreed upon by the State of Louisiana. Today and tomorrow, our integrated federal team in Louisiana is participating in two exercises to test local communications against the back drop of an evacuation. These efforts are fully integrated in the overall evacuation planning and exercises and the lessons learned will be integrated into the plan. We have also taken the initiative to work through a number of robust modeling scenarios to identify capabilities, shortfalls and requirements.

Because of the fragile nature of the Gulf Coast and with more than 100,000 travel trailers and mobile homes in the region, DHS and the State of Louisiana are working closely to do targeted evacuation planning in those committees.

Lastly, I can not stress enough that the Department is seeking to expand and amplify interstate emergency mutual aid pacts as a common sense solution to the challenges states face with large-scale evacuations.

## **National Response**

**Mr. Chairman, the committee has also expressed concern about the fact that critical elements of the National Response Plan (NRP) did not perform as intended. The NRP has been modified to improve and strengthen decision making.**

A critical element of strengthening the NRP is making sure key officials, at all levels of government, have a complete understanding of processes for coordination. The NRP was released only months prior to Hurricane Katrina. As several after-action reports from both the Legislative and Executive branches accurately note, the NRP was so new that it was not adequately socialized thus it was not fully operational when Hurricane Katrina hit.

Working toward continuous improvement, DHS is responsible for coordinating full reviews and updates of the NRP every four years, or more frequently if the Secretary deems necessary. In response to lessons learned, and prior to the onset of the 2006 hurricane season we have made the following critical revisions to the NRP:

- **The NRP is Always in Effect.** However, the implementation of NRP coordination mechanisms is flexible and scalable. Actions range in scope from ongoing situational reporting and analysis through the National Operations Center (NOC) to the implementation of NRP Annexes and other supplemental federal contingency plans, to full implementation of all relevant NRP coordination mechanisms outlined in the base plan.
- **Multiple Joint Field Offices.** Explicitly clarifying that multiple JFOs may be established in support of an incident (for both regional-level and nationwide incidents).

- **Principal Federal Official (PFO) and Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO) roles and responsibilities.** Clarifying the distinction between PFO and FCO roles and responsibilities, and providing the flexibility to designate a single individual as both PFO and FCO during certain highly complex or geographically dispersed incidents – for example, a hurricane with multi-state impact.
- **DoD Joint Task Force (JTF) Commander and JTF HQ.** If a JTF is established, consistent with operational requirements, its command and control element will be co-located with the PFO at the JFO to ensure coordination and unity of decisions with their counterpart state officials.
- **Structure of the JFO Sections.** Providing for the integration of the Emergency Support Functions into the JFO Sections rather than as stand-alone entities to improve federal inter-agency coordination.
- **Catastrophic Incident Annex.** Broadening the scope of the NRP Catastrophic Incident Annex to allow its use for both notice and no-notice events. This means that the Annex can be employed for any situation warranting a federal response.
- **Quick Reference Guide.** Providing a new Supplement to the National Response Plan for quick reference by senior government, non-government organizations, and private sector leadership to better support a common operations and decisions process during disasters.
- **Interagency Incident Management Group (IIMG) and Homeland Security Operations Center.** Reflecting the establishment of the National Operations Center as the successor to the Homeland Security Operations Center., This will improve our ability to anticipate needs and speed resources.
- **Incident of National Significance.** Clarifying the applicability of the Incidents of National Significance to ensure these events are recognized as requiring extra ordinary disaster response by federal agencies. The goal is to ensure appropriate attention to those disasters that required added federal support and emphasis.

- **Mitigation.** Acknowledging FEMA's reorganization of the mitigation program within ESF-14 and the Joint Field Office Operations Section which occurred after the NRP was implemented in April 2005.

These changes were made to better reflect the realities of how Federal, State, and community officials to respond to emergencies and disasters. Taken collectively, they provide further clarity for response roles, more flexibility to quickly establish coordinated response efforts and improve our ability to get critical supplies to disaster victims in concert with State and local officials.

### **Hurricane Preparedness**

Let me turn to some very specific elements for the upcoming hurricane season. Although hurricane season is only eight days away, we are and will continue to dramatically strengthen the nation's ability to respond to any potential hurricane disaster. The goal remains to be stronger and better prepared with each passing day. Our preparedness tempo for this season is: More Resources, Closer, Sooner and Safely. The hurricane preparedness initiatives we have taken and contingency plans we are prepared to execute operationally keep pace with this stepped-up tempo.

FEMA is improving its logistics systems and pre-staging of relief supplies. Since the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, FEMA, with support from the entire Department, has dramatically increased the amount of relief supplies on hand for pre-staging in the event of a future disaster. We have also developed an improved tracking system to improve the speed of their delivery.

Therefore, I would like to provide this committee with a snapshot of DHS' preparation efforts for the 2006 Hurricane Season. Bob Shea will provide additional detail.

On Monday, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA's) "Hurricane "Outlook" predictions for 2006 were released. The forecast gave an 80

percent chance for an above normal hurricane season on the Atlantic side. At the same press event, the central theme was personal responsibility for hurricane preparedness. My friend and colleague, Craig Fugate, who directs Emergency Management activity for the State of Florida devoted most of his remarks to the importance of a personal and family plan.

DHS is sponsoring regional Hurricane Preparedness Exercises (HPE) that will engage top officials from states and territories along the U.S. Gulf Coast and Eastern Seaboard and adjacent states within FEMA Regions I-IV and VI. These exercises are coordinated by the Office of Grants and Training (G&T) in conjunction with FEMA.

The exercises will include participation from Federal agencies, tribal entities, non-governmental organizations, and private sector partners. The Hurricane Preparedness Exercise Series will feature discussion-based exercises.

The exercises have been jointly coordinated by the Department's Office of Grants and Training and FEMA. Exercises are planned for every federal region subject to hurricane risk.

The primary goal of the Hurricane Preparedness Exercise Series is to validate improvements to Federal, State, and local hurricane response and recovery plans, standard operating procedures and practices based on the 2005 hurricane season after-action reports. These exercises will identify additional coordination and preparedness improvements for the 2006 hurricane season.

The exercises also provide a forum for senior Federal policy makers to answer questions and reinforce the National Incident Management System (NIMS) concepts and principles. This is an excellent opportunity for federal agencies to better understand the needs of the States and territories when a natural disaster occurs, including those that are catastrophic in scope.

Also, Mr. Chairman, when I leave this testimony I will be going over to the White House where key Cabinet officials are engaged in a hurricane exercise right now. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> senior exercise of this month and underscores that this Administration has taken the initiative to practice what it preaches about preparedness including at the most senior levels. We know that you can only build a culture of preparedness if you take it seriously and get real about the hard work it requires.

### **Communications and Command and Control**

**Mr. Chairman as you know the committee has expressed concerns about the impairment of command and control and situational awareness as a result of a massive breakdown in communications.**

In the areas of COMMUNICATION, COORDINATION, and SITUATIONAL AWARENESS:

- We have taken the initiative to co-locate local, State, and Federal authorities into one Joint Field Office (JFO) to streamline communication and improve coordination. We have recently updated the JFO Standard Operating Procedures to better clarify roles and responsibilities.
- We have taken the initiative to modify the National Response Plan to strengthen incident management and are field testing our situational awareness and Common Operating Picture (COP) process and supporting equipment to ensure connectivity and flow of information. This includes an enhanced capability to provide government-private sector linkages through the National Infrastructure Protection Program's information sharing and requests for assistance.
- We have taken the initiative to pre-designate and train 5 Principal Federal Officials (PFOs), 5 Deputy PFOs, and a number of Federal Coordinating Officers (FCOs) for this storm season to direct federal coordination in the event of a disaster in 20



hurricane prone states and territories. In addition, DOD has pre-positioned Defense Coordinating Officers with FEMA Regions to enhance pre-planning efforts.

- We have taken the initiative to form two 5-member Federal Incident Response Support Teams (FIRSTs) that are currently forward deployed to FEMA Regions IV and V. When deployed to an impacted area, these teams will provide targeted assessments and provide feedback to the JFO and the NRCC concerning the status of a particular community.
- We have taken the initiative to develop 15 two-member Department Situational Awareness Teams (DSAT) which are ready for deployment to a disaster zone. These self-sustaining strike teams staffed by 34 Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents, have been trained to provide real-time situational awareness directly to leaders in the field and DHS headquarters, serving as a means for validating information about a specific incident site.
- We have taken the initiative to be able to deploy Type III Incident Management Teams for regional response and command and control capacity. Participating partners are the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and local governmental entities throughout the country. These teams can assist heavily impacted local and state officials re-establish, if necessary, critical coordination capabilities.
- We have taken the initiative to negotiate and develop 31 pre-scripted Mission Assignments for rapid execution with 14 federal components and agencies. Last year, only 13 Mission Assignments were pre-scripted.

DHS has also initiated an unprecedented communications preparedness effort led by the National Communication System (NCS) and supported by FEMA, DOD, Coast Guard, and the Chief Information Officer. This planning effort directly supports FEMA's ability to provide emergency communications.

The National Communications System has engaged in unprecedented efforts to prepare for crises and the upcoming hurricane season. The NCS has a physical presence in Region IV (Atlanta, GA) and Region 6 (Denton, TX) and has hired an NCS Liaison Officer at U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM), in Colorado Springs, CO. These personnel will ensure effective, coordinated responses between these Regions and NORTHCOM and guide appropriate planning and relationship building. This physical presence in the three locations enhances preparedness and coordinated response by ensuring critical communications are uninterrupted.

The communication architecture of the Gulf States has been mapped so we have pre-season visibility as to what resources might be needed in the aftermath of a significant storm. Pre-scripted “Communications” Mission Assignments are ready for a wide range of potential needs based on this planning meaning that communication operability and interoperability systems can be placed in disaster areas more quickly.

The NCS has also taken the initiative to revamp its Emergency Support Function #2 Operational Plans to meet the changing face of crises and just recently held a two-day training exercise to ensure across-the-board understanding and improved capability to supply communication needs. The NCS has also established a Telecommunications Asset Database to provide visibility of available telecomm assets and capabilities for possible deployment into affected regions. This database and new planning approaches will enhance situational awareness before, during and after crises.

Relative to the New Orleans metropolitan area, initiative has been taken to develop specific plans and exercises between local, state and federal agencies, civilian and military, to ensure communications interoperability. Tactical and strategic communication capabilities are significantly better than last season. In fact, there are local exercises going on in Louisiana today.

State and local authorities are the first responders – and for most events on the risk continuum are the primary responders -- in the event of a disaster. Therefore, to

strengthen our partnerships with our State and local partners, DHS senior leaders have met with the governors of Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, and Virginia. In the coming weeks, we'll be meeting with the governors of North Carolina and Georgia. This personal outreach is an important element in our partnership role. We want to make clear our commitment to being unified partners.

### **Coordination with the Military**

**Mr. Chairman, the Committee has praised the role of the U.S. military in responding to Katrina, but has voiced concern over inadequate coordination.**

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, The Department of Homeland Security has taken the initiative to work seamlessly with the Department of Defense.

In partnership with DoD, DHS has:

- Identified, as part of the 31 categories of pre-scripted missions previously noted coordination ahead of time, everything from air support in the case of rescues, to medical support, to transportation;
- Scripted out all the missions that we might need;
- Tightened coordination with the nation's adjunct generals and U.S. NORTHCOM;
- Coordinated access for the National Guard to Emergency Management Assistance Compact missions;
- Placed Defense Coordinating Officers in all 10 Federal Emergency Management Agency Regions;
- Worked with USNORTHCOM to secure 12 planners to provide support for evacuation and communications planning missions;
- Worked with USNORTHCOM to exchange liaison officers with DHS/ National Communications System and conducted over 7 exercises between DoD and interagency partners on communications;
- Worked with USNORTHCOM to secure their active participation in the National Assessments conducted by DHS. U.S. NORTHCOM has initiated a supporting process to task, conduct, process and disseminate damage assessments. These will

utilize ground, rotary wing, fixed wing and space assets in the pre-event, immediate post-event and follow-on timeframes; and, of course,

- Worked closely with U.S. NORTHCOM on broader coordination, and exercises to streamline the process for DoD to support the Department of Homeland Security with capabilities when assigned missions by the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security acting in his capacity as National Incident Manager.

Lastly, Members of the Committee, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense Paul McHale and Major General Richard J. Rowe, Jr., Director of Operations, United States Northern Command, are scheduled to testify before the House Armed Services Community tomorrow on this subject. While I would not want to be accused of stealing their thunder, I have seen the testimony and it too reflects the robust support DHS is seeing from the military and the unity of effort we are striving for in our preparations for this year's hurricane season.

### **DHS Public Affairs and Outreach Strategy**

**Mr. Chairman, this Committee has voiced concern about a lack of effective public communications strategy during, and following, Hurricane Katrina that led to civil unrest and further delayed relief.**

While both the White House and the GAO reports noted federal interagency coordination, FEMA has been working closely with DHS Public Affairs to update ESF #15 External Affairs functions. They have just finished updating the Emergency Support Function (ESF) 15 Standard Operating Procedures and have developed a concept of operations for hurricane season communications that will ensure dissemination of key messages throughout the readiness, response and recovery phases. This team is building a comprehensive library of communications products such as news release templates, fact sheets on programs, public service announcement scripts for use in disaster operations. The Public Affairs function is the largest ESF with over 3,500 people and coordination of responsibilities among State, local, private sector, and communities.

In addition, FEMA has conducted unprecedented public communications outreach in preparation for the 2006 hurricane season. This outreach generates media interest and engages State and local officials in communicating disaster preparedness, damage prevention and new initiatives and improvements that are being done to enhance and expand capabilities. The end goal is to educate the public on the roles that individuals, voluntary organizations, and local, State and Federal government assume during a disaster. Several States have indicated that they will incorporate ESF #15 SOPs into their own communications plans to ensure consistency and coordination of communications efforts.

To achieve this, FEMA has worked to get out information through many venues. Examples of this include:

- Press releases with a fact sheet have been distributed nationally outlining initiatives being undertaken by the agency to improve operations. Extensive media interviews have been done to talk about what FEMA is doing to prepare for emergency operations in 2006 and also educating on the role the local, State and Federal governments have during a disaster.
- FEMA has participated in hurricane conferences in states such as Virginia, Maryland and Florida. Under Secretary-nominee Paulison has spoken at these conferences as well as the National Hurricane Conference about FEMA initiatives and the roles and responsibilities at all levels of government. Booths at the larger conferences supplied extensive preparedness materials to attendees as well an opportunity to speak directly with FEMA representatives.
- FEMA partnered with NOAA for their annual Hurricane Hunter Tour, which this year included the states of Texas, Alabama and Florida. The week-long tour included media and the opportunity to reach out to groups such as children, local officials and congressional offices to convey preparedness information.

- A FloodSmart campaign to encourage individuals to purchase flood insurance was kicked off on May 1, 30 days out from the start of the 2006 hurricane season. This campaign included press releases, talking points and a satellite media tour to TV and radio stations.

A push on public service announcements (PSAs), both TV and radio, is in the works from FEMA on preparing for disaster, specifically hurricanes. The National Association of Broadcasters is assisting in distributing the TV PSA to their members, and FEMA is pushing regionally as well.

FEMA has opened disaster offices across many of the hurricane prone states. Staff in all these offices are working with their states and doing outreach about preparedness and the upcoming hurricane season.

In addition, DHS and FEMA have initiated a quarterly conference call with all State communications officers, established an emergency communications protocol with state representatives, and, through the regional public affairs officers, regularly emphasize Federal-state relationship building.

The United States Fire Administration has taken the initiative and added robust communications capabilities to our National Preparedness efforts generally and hurricane preparedness specifically through the Preparedness Network, PREPnet. A few examples:

- PREPnet broadcasts are now formalized and reach into all Areas of Dominant Influence (ADI) regions of the country;
- PREPnet currently has 4,131 stakeholders, studios, locations, journalists around the nation who receive PREPnet programming schedules. Sites incapable of receiving programming by satellite can request a DVD;
- PREPnet utilizes internet capacities to broadcast messages to cell phone, trees and make messages available for download to IPODs.

The DHS Ready Campaigns and Citizen Corp are also launching public awareness initiatives. I'm sure the Committee would like to know that the Ready Campaign is about to launch a public awareness campaign which will include former Presidents Bush and Clinton. Over 2006, the Citizen Corps will spend \$19 million for: developing and implementing plans to achieve citizen preparedness and participation; conducting public education and outreach; ensuring clear emergency communications with the public; and, and developing training programs for the public. Through the Department's *Ready.gov* website, individuals can access critical preparedness information. The *Ready Campaign* is providing specific populations with tailored packages of hazard-specific preparedness information.

## **DHS Medical Planning**

**Mr. Chairman, the Committee has noted that Medical care and evacuations suffered from a lack of advance preparations, inadequate communications and coordination difficulties.**

I share this concern, but note that DHS is, at present, the lead agency for National Disaster Medical System (NDMS). However, DHS has clearly articulated that under the NRP, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has the lead for Emergency Support Function #8 – Public Health and Medical Services.

Therefore, HHS is responsible for coordinating the health and medical services provided by all Federal departments and agencies to fulfill requirements identified by State and local authorities. HHS will issue all deployment orders and mission assignments for the NDMS. Upon receipt of those assignments, it will be up to DHS to deploy the NDMS accordingly.

DHS recently took the initiative to execute an action memorandum vesting medical planning and medical operations oversight of the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS) in the Office of the Chief Medical Officer (OCMO). As a result, the OCMO

has assumed primary responsibility for enhancing coordination between DHS and HHS, particularly with regard to the integration of NDMS into the ESF #8 continuum of public health and medical response capabilities.

To improve inter-Departmental coordination between DHS and HHS, several inter-agency working groups were formed focusing on hurricane and pandemic influenza preparedness. In addition, NDMS has initiated joint planning meetings with HHS to define the coordination and deployment of public health and medical response resources.

In this role, HHS becomes involved when there is an incident that precipitates the activation of the NRP and ESF #8. When States and local governments are overwhelmed in disaster situations, FEMA can be tasked to activate and deploy the NDMS.

NDMS has taken the initiative to preposition their medical response teams earlier and closer to the incident this hurricane season. These teams, including Disaster Medical Assistance Teams (DMATs), Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Teams (DMORTs), Veterinary Assistance Teams (VMATs) and appropriate Management Support Teams will deploy at least 2 days prior to landfall to Federal mobilization centers in order to be ready to operate as soon as possible.

**The OCMO is coordinating closely with HHS by:**

- Participating in revisions to the ESF #8 Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs);
- Assisting in the development of a detailed playbook and a revised concept of operations (CONOPS) for ESF #8 hurricane response;
- Participating in multiple hurricane preparedness trips and planning efforts in NOLA and the Gulf Coast region;
- Creating an opportunity for a Public Health Service physician to be detailed to OCMO to improve inter-agency communication and medical operations coordination; and,



- Developing/staffing four inter-agency workgroups to address ESF #8 issues, including: *Incident Command; Pre-scripted Mission Assignments; Human Services; and NDMS Medical Operations.*

As a Department, and particularly with respect to public health and medical issues, we are better prepared now than before Katrina because:

The role of DHS as the overall incident manager is more clearly defined, as are the roles of Departments charged with leading (or supporting) the various Emergency Support Functions.

NDMS has a "medical voice" (OCMO) within DHS that it did not have during Katrina; as a result, we will be better able to establish requirements for ESF #8 and coordinate with HHS to ensure they have the NDMS assets they need to fulfill those requirements.

Critically, DHS has taken the initiative to work the logistics side of the medical mission. FEMA Logistics Division has completed a memorandum of understanding with the Defense Logistics Agency to ensure timely and adequate Logistics support for NDMS deployed teams, pharmaceuticals and medical/surgical supplies.

In addition, the DHS Office of the Chief Medical Officer is better prepared now than before Katrina since the role of DHS as the overall incident manager is more clearly defined, as are the roles of Departments charged with leading (or supporting) the various Emergency Support Functions.

## **FEMA's Challenges**

**Mr. Chairman, the Committee has expressed concerns that FEMA's inability to provide adequate shelter and temporary housing, was due to poor logistics and contracting and should be taken out of the Department of Homeland Security.**

I understand that concern and am happy to report to the Committee that FEMA, as an integral part of the overall DHS-led national planning effort, has taken a quantum leap in capability. While not perfect, it is rapidly improving *because* it is part of DHS.

### **The FEMA and DHS Debate**

Undoubtedly you have heard the recent rhetoric surrounding the FEMA and DHS debate—whether FEMA should be in DHS or out. But I think it’s important for us to understand that our national preparedness efforts depend on unity and leadership commitment. We have not taken FEMA out of preparedness nor have we taken preparedness out of FEMA. FEMA is a critical element of the Department and continues to play a significant preparedness and response role.

The same is true for our other DHS components as well, such as Customs and Border Protection, the Coast Guard, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Secret Service, Transportation Security Administration and Citizenship and Immigration Services, and many more. All are vitally important to DHS’s role in strengthening America’s preparedness.

Prior to the creation of the Preparedness Directorate, no single organization within the federal government was responsible for integrating national preparedness activities across all preparedness stakeholders.

FEMA is not responsible for national preparedness – it is responsible for preparing to tactics and operations to respond to specific emergencies. Our success in building national preparedness requires a combination of involvement and commitment by members from all levels of Federal, State, and local governments, our territorial and tribal partners, and the private sectors. Although FEMA is a very capable preparedness entity, there are other operational preparedness functions undertaken every day by other elements of DHS and Departments within the Executive Branch.

For instance, the Coast Guard plays a leading role in ensuring the Nation's maritime preparedness, and is the government lead for Maritime Search and Rescue, Port Safety and Security, Maritime Environmental Protection, and Maritime Defense Readiness Operations. The Coast Guard has a significant preparedness role throughout the U.S. as do many of our other DHS components. The Environmental Protection Agency and the Coast Guard are the primary agencies responsible for the development, implementation, and preparedness planning of the National Contingency Plan for oil and hazardous materials response. The Secret Service is responsible for planning and executing National Special Security Events. The Office of Grants and Training was responsible for development of the National Preparedness Goal as per HSPD-8 and has been instrumental in supporting and coordinating State and local training and exercises. Our Chief Medical Officer, in concert with the Department of Health and Human Services and the White House Homeland Security Council, is responsible for developing the nation's Pandemic Flu plan and oversees our nation's preparedness for biological threats and incident. The Radiological Emergency Preparedness program and the Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness program are now managed by the Assistant Secretary for Infrastructure Protection. The Office of State and Local Government Coordination regularly coordinates with state, local, tribal, and territorial partners and has a significant role in intergovernmental affairs.

External to DHS is the Army Corps of Engineers, which is responsible for building and maintaining dams and levees and serves the public and Armed Forces by providing vital engineering services and capabilities across the full spectrum of operations—from peace to war and in support of national interests. During disasters, the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army manage temporary shelters or disaster feeding stations. The National Weather Service makes weather predictions, flies into hurricanes and predicts when rivers will surpass flood stage. The National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency provides timely, relevant, and accurate geospatial intelligence in support of national security objectives and has also developed private-sector partnerships to provide web-based geospatial information to the American public. State and local officials are responsible for local law enforcement, fire fighting, emergency services, and ordering evacuations of

communities when necessary. The States can call out the National Guard when required. And of course, the Department of Defense provides tremendous support through the Military Support to Civil Authorities process.

The above examples clearly illustrate how FEMA is but a part of the broader mosaic of national preparedness. I have reviewed the bills introduced by Representatives Reichert and Young, and I have thoughtfully considered their suggestions. Ideally, DHS must remain a unified preparedness, prevention, and response national capability—breaking FEMA away from DHS will only serve to alienate and confuse an integrated preparedness process. I am not convinced that making FEMA an independent agency can prepare the nation alone. The Preparedness Directorate, along with all its DHS and DHS partners, has the authority, responsibility, and the capability for national preparedness integration and will continue to empower and harmonize preparedness across the nation. FEMA is largely focused on preparing for specific tactical and operational responses, the provision of supplementary resources to state and local governments, and individual relief efforts. The National Preparedness mission of the Preparedness Directorate dovetails nicely with FEMA’s operational mission; however, pulling FEMA out of DHS puts the huge strides we have taken towards integration at risk; similarly, merging the two organizations risks damaging the focus on developing a national preparedness strategy because operational necessity will invariably strain resources devoted to the broader mission.

### **Emergency Shelter**

**Mr. Chairman, the Committee has raised concerns about FEMA’s ability to provide emergency shelter.**

I shared that concern as I took office in January and am happy to report Mr. Chairman, that FEMA, working within DHS, and with our interagency partners, has taken the initiative to secure a quantum leap of capability to deploy emergency shelters, temporary housing and related resources – they are on-hand and ready to be forward deployed.

- FEMA has ensured the availability of 829 generators; 220 trucks loaded with FEMA Blue Roof plastic sheeting for at least 90,000 roofs; and more than 20 trucks with enough tarps for over 80,000 households.
- Feeding and sheltering agencies and federal partners have completed numerous tabletop exercises aimed at speeding up shipments of needed supplies and ensuring seamless coordination in serving disaster victims.

To better track these vital disaster resources, DHS has developed a relief supplies tracking system which is currently in place in FEMA regions IV (Atlanta, Georgia) and VI (Fort Worth, Texas).

Also, DHS is doubling FEMA's customer service and call capacity where FEMA will have the capacity to handle at least 200,000 assistance calls a day. In addition, over 13,000 mobile homes and 3,000 travel trailers are available for temporary housing of disaster victims which greatly speeds the availability of temporary housing.

### **FEMA Logistics**

**Mr. Chairman, the Committee has raised concerns that FEMA logistics and contracting systems failed to support needs on-the-ground after Katrina.**

Again Mr. Chairman, I'm honored to tell this committee that FEMA, working with DHS and its interagency partners has taken the initiative and is better prepared to respond to the logistical challenges of the emergency response this year.

- FEMA has stockpiled 4 times the amount of Meals-Ready-To-Eat (MREs) as compared with Hurricane Katrina. We have over 770 trucks with enough MREs to sustain 1 million people for 7 days. Prior to Katrina, there were 180 trucks.

- FEMA has acquired 2.5 times the amount of water as compared with Hurricane Katrina. We have over 1,540 trucks with enough water to sustain 1 million people for 7 days are in stock. Prior to Katrina, there were 600 trucks.
- FEMA has procured 4 times the amount of ice as compared with Hurricane Katrina. We have over 2,030 trucks with enough ice to sustain 1 million people for 10 days. Prior to Katrina, there were only 430 trucks.

### **Individuals and Charitable Organizations**

#### **Mr. Chairman, the Committee has raised concerns about the adequacy of preparations by charitable organizations and citizen preparedness.**

The Red Cross has taken the initiative to pre-position supplies in 21 cities in 9 states to serve 1 million meals and shelter 500,000 people per day. Working with FEMA, the American Red Cross (ARC) has initiated work on a national shelter database aimed at pre-identifying shelter facilities to facilitate the rapid movement of evacuees to safe and secure locations. Listings will include public and private shelters, Red Cross and non-Red Cross shelters, and faith-based facilities. FEMA is working with state and local partners to ensure these listings are as complete as possible before Hurricane Season 2006. We expect the data will be available in early June.

### **Conclusion – People and Planning**

I often tell people that the single most important thing they can do to prepare is to develop a personal or family emergency plan. Through individual efforts we will enable a national culture of preparedness. This culture of preparedness will take time but the concept of personal preparedness must be part of the fabric of our daily lives.

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita have taught all of us valuable lessons on the significance of preparedness for natural and other disasters. The Department of Homeland Security in

particular, and the Executive branch generally, have responded to these valuable lesson and taken the initiative in literally hundreds of ways to make preparedness a core mission. Of course, we look forward to building on these efforts until we are truly a nation prepared.

Finally, regarding the bottom-line concern of the Committee and the American people:--

Are we prepared?

Mr. Chairman, based on my 20 plus years of professional involvement in the Emergency Management field, I have never seen the Federal Government in a stronger posture: more institutionally and organizationally integrated; more forward leaning; more capable of leveraging the comprehensive tools of national power; and finally, more prepared to initiate, anticipate, and respond to the threat continuum.

My greatest hope is that the Federal Government will facilitate greater levels of preparedness at all levels now that momentum in this direction is building. I'm confident that our partners at the state and local level will respond and raise the bar for acceptable levels of preparedness nationally.

My greatest concern is that while those that run the government are more prepared, the American people – those who run this great country - must succeed at making the nation prepared; they must be in the game in a serious deliberate way. Frankly we all can be better prepared as individuals, families and members of our communities.

I'll end by respectfully asking you, as leaders in the country, to take the initiative to help spread the importance of building a culture of preparedness for all citizens – for their family, their community; their places of work and their nation. This Memorial Day as you give speeches remembering those who were prepared to – and did - make the ultimate sacrifice for their fellow-countrymen, remind them during this long war against terrorism and the various natural and man-made threats, to honor those who died for this country, and those they care about by being better prepared to persevere through times of

adversity in their daily lives. If I didn't ask you to do this ladies and gentleman of the Committee I wouldn't be doing my job.

I'd like to thank the committee for its time today.